



TITLE:

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CITATION:

Tanaka, Yuno ...[et al]. Interview and Community Participation Event About the Area History for Finding Attractiveness of South Town in Prague. *Procedia Engineering* 2016, 161: 213-220

ISSUE DATE:

2016-01-01

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/218329>

RIGHT:

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Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**

Procedia Engineering 161 (2016) 213 – 220

**Procedia
Engineering**www.elsevier.com/locate/procediaWorld Multidisciplinary Civil Engineering-Architecture-Urban Planning Symposium 2016,
WMCAUS 2016

Interview and community participation event about the area history for finding attractiveness of South Town in Prague

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Abstract

In the Czech Republic, the housing estates consist of prefabricated housings developed in socialist era are often have called as "uniform" with negative images. However, these housing estates continue to be one of main housing stocks in Czech until today and the regeneration of the housing estates have already started in some areas. Therefore, present environments of these housing estates can be reevaluated from the viewpoint of area history. In this paper, South Town (Jižní Město, JM), one of the largest housing estates in Prague, is a case study area. By the cooperation with Prague 11 municipality, the interview research was done in October 2013 with 13 inhabitants and the community participation event "Interesting places of Prague 11" was held in September 2015 and about 400 comments were gathered in 3 days. The interviews and the event with inhabitants illustrated that public facilities and transportation systems have been evaluated since the beginning of the housing development because of their accessibility and convenience. At the same time, green areas around JM have been evaluated because they can be used for relaxation and outdoor exercise. In addition, open spaces in JM are highly evaluated compared with them in socialist era.

Through the analysis of the development history of JM and the results of interviews and the event, one of the biggest problems of JM had been the time gap between the completion of housings and other living environmental conditions. Only the panel housings could be completed so quickly at the very beginning of the development, but recently regeneration works for improving the green spaces around housings have been operated. According to the interviews, the upgrading of the qualities of neighbourhoods was evaluated positively, but new housing developments in green spaces were often criticized.

The values were pointed out by the inhabitants because of mainly four reasons; utility, memory, personal preference, and public value. About things which have utility, some of them have already existed since the socialist era and the others were made after democratization. Things which are connected with inhabitants' good memories have been accumulating since they start their lives in JM. Personal preference is for example, colour of building, design of art work, etc. Public value means things which have high evaluation by the public.

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It can be thought that value by utility can be getting better by adding amenities lacked in socialist era. Even after the utility achieves enough level, value by memory will have been accumulated without limitation and would be one of the important factors of the value of JM. Then, if these memories are shared with the inhabitants, they can be the public value.

The results clarified lots of efforts for improvement and values of JM. It also shows a possibility that there are improvements and values in other prefab housing estates not only in the Czech Republic but also all around the world. In future, these 'uniform' prefab housing estates can be revaluated as 'unique' housing estates with their own area histories and values.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of WMCAUS 2016

Keywords: housing estate; revaluation; interview; community participation event; South Town, Prague.

1. Introduction

In the Czech Republic, the housing estates consist of prefab housings developed in socialist era are often have called as 'uniform' with negative images. However, these housing estates continue to be one of main housing stocks in the Czech Republic until today and the regeneration of the housing estates have already started in some areas. Therefore, present environments of these housing estates can be revaluated from the viewpoint of area history. In this paper, South Town (Jižní Město, JM), one of the largest housing estates in Prague, is a case study area.

2. Background and method of the research

JM development can be divided in two parts. First is JM I, which was developed in 1971-1985 and second is JM II developed in 1981-1992 (Table 1, Fig. 1). JM was built at the end of socialist era, so the quality and the surroundings of housings are worse than the housing estates developed in the beginning of the socialist era, and the master plan of JM had to be changed several times because of construction cost and systems (Maier et al., 1998). Therefore, the living environment of JM had been generally criticized as the failure of socialist era. After democratization, Prague city and Prague 11 municipality has been trying for improvement of the living environment of JM. Now, about a quarter of century have been passed since the democratization, is a good time to reevaluate the housing estates developed in socialist era from the viewpoint of area history in order to know the transformation of JM so far and find attractiveness of the area for effective regeneration in the future. In this research, we interviewed with inhabitants of JM and held a community participation event about the area history for finding attractiveness of JM (Fig. 2).

Table 1. Basic information of JM development, [1].

Name	JM I*	JM II
Development period	1971-1985	1981-1992
Land area (ha)	371,71	137,50
Number of dwelling units[Prefab units]	21860 [21780]	8419 [8314]
Architect*	Jiří Lasovský Jan Krásný Miroslav Řihošek	J. Zelený Rothbauerová

/*The architects of JM I are not described on "REGENERACE", so it is referred to ppt data of Prague 11 municipality, "Prague 11 Today, History and expansion of development (update:March 2015)."

To get the opinions from inhabitants of JM, interviews and a community participation event were implemented by the cooperation with Prague 11 municipality. Thirteen inhabitants were interviewed in October 2013, through a Czech-Japanese interpreter to get rid of the inconvenience of language. The interviews took about an hour per person. Interviewees were talked about their daily life, favourite places of JM, and so on. Age groups, settled areas, periods of residence of the interviewees are various in order to obtain various comments from different viewpoints (Table 2).

The community participation event "Interesting places of Prague 11" was held in September 2015 as the part of the area event "The days of Prague 11" (Figure 3). We prepared a giant map of JM (about 3m × 6m), and participants wrote comments about the places they are interested in. About 400 comments were gathered in three days. The participants were mainly families or children of elementary school age or younger.

The topics picked up in two surveys were classified into seven categories by land use: housings, public facilities, commercial facilities, open spaces, roads and transportations, green areas around JM, and others (unclassifiable by land use such as activities). In addition, the comments in interviews were divided into three by time: before 1989 (socialist era), 1990-2000 (democracy era and before a regeneration policy was published by the municipality), and

after 2001 (after the regeneration policy was published). In 2001, Prague 11 municipality published a regeneration policy which could promote the regeneration of the environment (Table 3). More details about regeneration policies are in our previous paper (Tanaka and Kanki, 2013). At the event, the result wasn't divided by time because most of the cards are about present situation.

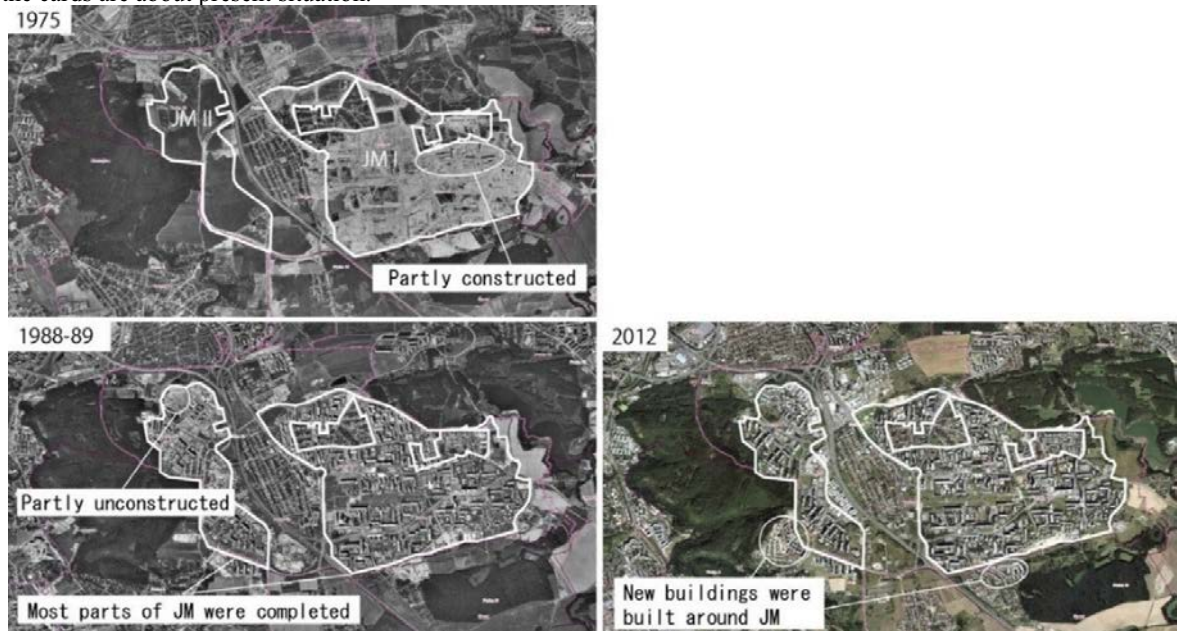


Fig. 1. Transformation of JM development, [6] modified by author.

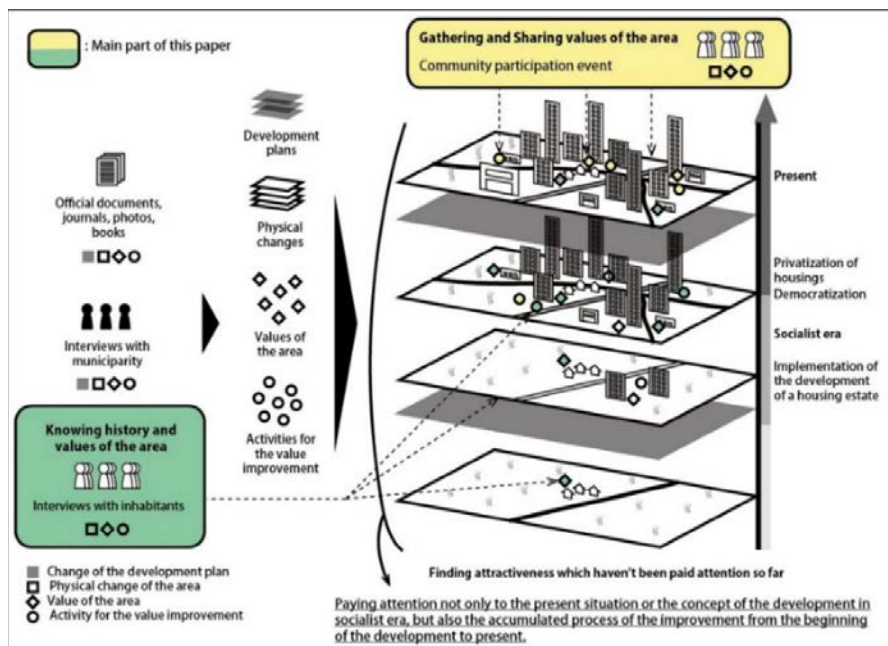
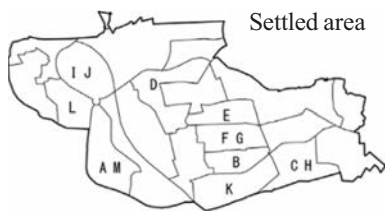


Fig. 2. Framework of the research and main part of this paper.

Table 2. Basic information of interviewees

	Age (in 2013)	Gender	Period of residence in JM
A	50s	female	1985-
B	30s	female	1999-
C	50s	female	1979-
D	50s	female	1981-89, 96-
E	30s	female	2013-
F	30s	male	1978-
G	30s	female	1979-
H	60s	male	1979-
I	10s	female	1996-
J	10s	male	1994-
K	30s	male	1981-
L	30s	male	2011-
M	20s	male	1987-



How to Write?

- Find your house, school or workplace.
 - Write something which exists around your house and how do you feel about them.
 - Write about your favorite places and the places where you often go.
- Why do you like it?
- Write any differences between past and present situation of the neighbourhood.

Table 3. New policies and development of Prague 11, Source: Interview with Prague 11 municipality and their official website

Year	Policies for regeneration	Unique building construction
1993	Urban strategic study [to complete the estate by additional construction of the absent facilities to improve the quality of living in the panel houses and their environments]	
1994		Senior house
1995		Archive of capital city of Prague, State Region Archive and State Central Archive
2001	The Study of regeneration of Prague 11 [creating the main rules for regeneration of buildings, public outdoor spaces, green areas, playgrounds, pedestrian ways, parking places, system of roads] Fund for housing purchaser	
2004		Curling Hall
2005		Commercial-administrative center Chodov
2007		Community center of Matka Tereza
2008	Housing repair contest (-until now) [annual event for the housings of housing cooperation and homeowner association]	Administrative center The Park Chodovská tvrz park
2009	Questionnaire about the environment to JM inhabitants [distribution: 22000, answer:3400]	
2010		Sport Hall South Town
2011	"MĚSTO PRO ŽIVOT"(Town for life) program(-until now) [for smooth communication among housing cooperation, homeowner association, and municipality]	
2014		Pool and sports complex



Fig. 3. Explanation for writing comment cards
(left) Event "Interesting places of Prague 11" (right) Comment cards on the map



Photo 1. Chodovská tvrz (Fort).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results of interviews and the event

The results are shown in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 and the results per topic are described as follows.

3.1.1. Housings

In socialist era, all of the apartments were grey, so an interviewee said he lost his way to his apartment. After 1989, lots of apartments were repaired their facade, and some of interviewees were satisfied with the colour of the facade, but some didn't care, and others didn't like the colour. Some interviewees said they like low-rise apartments, but some of the inhabitants of high-rise buildings said they like the view from their apartments.

3.1.2. Public facilities

Schools have been evaluated since the beginning of JM development because of the good connection with housings. Chodovská tvrz (Photo 1), a fort from 13th century was repaired from 1984 to 1989 and became event hall for concert etc., evaluated positively both of in interviews and at the event. The sports facilities such as curling hall, swimming pool which were built after 2000 were also popular. At the event, lots of comments about elementary school and kindergarten were gathered. They were mainly from the student of each school. They write about their teacher, friends, and special activities positively. It can be thought that the main participants of this event were children, so their sphere of activity were clearly affected the results.

3.1.3. Commercial facilities

Before 1989, only about supermarket and restaurant were told in interviews. Comparison of before and after 1989, various commercial facilities, not only supermarket and restaurant but also large shopping center, cinema and climbing center etc., were mentioned after 1989. However, the values of these facilities are depending on person.

3.1.4. Open spaces

An interviewee said that there had been no green areas in JM at the beginning of JM development, and the other said that he did volunteer work of tree planting. After 1989, some interviewees pointed out that the green spaces increased. Some interviewees said that Centrální park, which is the largest park in JM, had developed and the environment was better than before (Photo 2, Photo 3). That means the environment of the open spaces became better than before by activities of inhabitants and municipality. At the event, the most selected point was Chodovská tvrz park (26 comments), probably because it is the event space. The comments are for example, "very nice park", "good for roller skating", "Before here is a swamp, but now a beautiful park", etc.

3.1.5. Roads and transportations

Bus and metro are main public transportations and there is highway D1 between JM I and II. Interviewees had been satisfied with transportation system since the beginning of the development because of convenience.

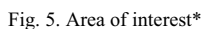
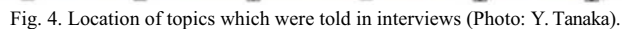
3.1.6. Green areas around JM

There are four forests around JM and they had been evaluated as relaxation areas with nature (Photo 4). Inhabitants can swim in a pond, go cycling and take a walk. Especially, these green areas were very important for interviewees before 1989 because the inside of JM were almost no entertainment facilities and green spaces. Forests around JM got many positive comments at the event, too.

3.1.7. Others (unclassifiable by land use such as activities)

The number is not so many, but some inhabitant's comments positively about art works, neighbourhood.

3.2 Discussion about results



/*It was asked participants to write the positive points of JM, but some negative comments or demands were written in cards, so the result includes such kind of cards, too.

The values were pointed out by the inhabitants because of mainly four reasons; utility, memory, personal preference, and public value (Table 4). About things which have utility, some of them have already existed since the socialist era and the others were made after democratization. Things which are connected with inhabitants' good memories have been accumulating since they start their lives in JM. Personal preference is for example, colour of building, design of art work, etc. Public value means things which have high evaluation by the public, so inhabitants recognized them as values without particular reasons.



Photo 2. Centrální park (around 1982-7), [5].



Photo 3. Centrální park (2013).



Photo 4. Miličovský les (Forest).

Table 4. Reasons of value and example comments of each reason

Reason of value	Topic	Comment
Utility	Elementary school	"The good point is that the elementary school is near to my house."
	Traffic system	"Access to the highway is good. I can go to my parents' summer house easily by car."
Memory	Kunratický les	(It was pointed out as the best part of the area), "We went here to play when my child is small. Also we can do mushroom gathering here. Recently we go other place to do it, but we often went here before."
	Forest in northeast	"I have the best memory here because I used to go here with pushing a stroller when my child is small."
Personal preference	View from apartment	"I like the view from my apartment. It is very nice because I live on 7th floor."
	Elementary school	"At first the color of the school looked strange for me, but my child is satisfied with it. So, now I like it."
Public value	Chodovská tvrz	"I have no particular reasons, but I think it is good. I sometimes go here to concert on business, but I don't like classical music."
	Centrální Park	"My recommended place of Prague 11 is Centrální Park. I don't have particular reasons."

4. Conclusions

Generally, the housing estates developed in socialist era in Prague city have been often explained with negative image so far. However, inhabitants who live in JM, one of the housing estates developed in socialist era, have evaluated some points (connection of schools and housings, transportation system, etc.) since the beginning of the development. Besides, the better transformation of the environment was also recognized. It can be thought that value by utility can be getting better by adding amenities lacked in socialist era. Even after the utility achieves enough level, value by memory will have been accumulated without limitation and would be one of the important factors of the value of JM. Then, if these memories are shared with the inhabitants, they can be the public value.

The results clarified lots of efforts for improvement and values of JM. It also shows a possibility that there are lots of improvements and values in other prefabricated housing estates not only in the Czech Republic but also all around the world. In future, these 'uniform' prefabricated housing estates can be reevaluated as 'unique' housing estates with their own area histories and lots of values.

Acknowledgements

The authors sincerely grateful to Ms. Miroslava Fišarová of Prague 11 municipality, Ms. Miwa Oi and Ms. Adéla Řezníčková, to their support for the interviews, and Mr. Jan Topinka and Ms. Alžběta Tichá of Prague 11 municipality,

and Ms. Lucie Hayashi for the community participation event. The community participation event was supported by Housing Research Foundation JUSOKEN, research grant project no.1419 “area value of prefab housing estates developed in socialist era in the Czech Republic” (Chief researcher: Yuno Tanaka) .

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